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Committees
Economic Development, Small
Business and Regulatory Reform VC
Families and Human Services VC
Government Operations
Health Policy

The Jacobs Report

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, June 27, 2003

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SMALL GROUP INSURANCE REFORM CLEARS LEGISLATURE

Legislation that would distinguish Michigan as the 38th state to set rate bands limiting health insurance rates charged to small businesses is a major step closer to law, after both the Senate and House approved changes SB 234 and SB 460. Involved parties fully expect the governor to sign the package into law next week.

The final vote in the House demonstrated how involved and exhausting the process has been, as Rep. Stephen Ehardt (R-Lexington) broke into tears after an emotional address that brought his colleagues to their feet in appreciation even as it did not sway votes. "He was very emotional over this issue," commented one of his colleagues, "But it was very clear that he was on the wrong side of it."

When it was all said and done, both conference reports were adopted by the Senate on 33-3 votes and in the House by votes of 78-30 and 81-27.

While they were labeled compromises by conference committee chair Sen. Bev Hammerstrom (R-Temperance), they follow the versions approved by the Senate more than the House-passed bills.

"It's really the right step," Ms. Hammerstrom told reporters. "It's good policy."

CEMETERY BILLS ON WAY TO GOVERNOR

Last week, the House overwhelmingly passed a package of three bills that clearly define how a cemetery must use monies secured in endowment care funds. The bills specifically describe uses of the fund for maintenance, improvement, and beautification of the cemetery grounds.

Senate Bills 37, 38, and 39 amend the Cemetery Regulation Act to more specifically define the uses of endowment care and perpetual care funds for cemetery upkeep and maintenance to assure access to interment rights.

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Specifically designed to protect consumers from cemetery scams, the bills are expected to be signed into law by Governor Granholm soon. "These bills protect the rights of citizens who have purchased burial plots," said primary sponsor Gilda Z. Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods). "Recently, one of my constituents was trying to make burial arrangements for her husband when the cemetery informed her that the plot her family had purchased in the 1940's was now unfit for burial. She had to spend \$2,000 of her own money for improvements so that the plot could be used for what it was purchased for in the first place. During a time of grief and loss, this should be the last thing someone has to worry about. Once this legislation is law, it will prevent this from happening to anyone else."

GOVERNOR, LEGISLATURE, WORKING OUT BUDGET DIFFERENCES

Tuesday, Governor Jennifer Granholm said she was ready to meet at any time with legislative leaders and they said they were willing to meet with her in an effort to steer the budget into a safe harbor. This tone was a welcome departure from last week, when hostilities between parties seemed to reach a boiling point. The governor's spokesperson, Liz Boyd, said Ms. Granholm was very concerned about the tone of last Friday's meeting, particularly "the lack of civility."

Rising to top of the list of contested issues are charter schools, merit scholarships and Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) road projects. The governor announced that a target meeting for these issue discussions has been scheduled, with important decisions forthcoming in the next two weeks.

State Senator Gilda Jacobs represents the 14th Senate District, which includes Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Franklin, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak Township, Southfield, and Southfield Township. She is the Minority Vice Chair of the Families & Human Services Committee and the Economic Development, Small Business & Regulatory Reform Committee. She also serves on the Government Operations and Health Policy Committees.

Constituents of the 14th District may contact Senator Jacobs at sengjacobs@senate.michigan.gov or toll-free at 1-888-937-4453.

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